

were released on appeal in June, with their sentences suspended. Another woman activist, Yorm Bopha, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on fabricated charges in December.

■ Prominent journalist and government critic Mam Sonando, aged 71, was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in October for anti-state offences, including instigating "insurrection" in Kratie province. The charges were believed to be politically motivated, and no evidence warranting a conviction was presented at the trial. He was a prisoner of conscience.

Forced evictions

The crisis over land continued, with forced evictions, land disputes and land-grabbing affecting thousands of people and resulting in a rise in protests. In May, the government announced a moratorium on granting Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), and a review of existing ELCs to ensure that they conformed with existing regulations. Several ELCs were granted after the moratorium. In June, the Prime Minister launched a project to allocate land titles to people living inside state forests, and economic and other land concessions. Thousands of student volunteers were tasked with mapping land and collecting information on occupancy.

■ In a violent forced eviction in January, the homes of around 300 families living in Borei Keila, central Phnom Penh, were destroyed by construction workers from a development company. Security forces used tear gas and rubber bullets against the residents, and rocks, logs and bottles were thrown during clashes. More than 64 people were reportedly injured, and eight people arrested. The evictees were taken to two relocation sites outside Phnom Penh with no adequate sanitation, housing or work opportunities. Some 125 families refused to go, and remained in squalid conditions near their former homes.

International justice

Investigations into Cases 003 and 004 were stalled amidst allegations of government interference in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The Supreme Council of Magistracy rejected the appointment of reserve Judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet as International Co-Investigating Judge in January, despite his nomination by the UN. He resigned, effective early May, citing obstruction by his Cambodian counterpart. US Judge Mark Harmon

replaced him in October, but no progress in the two cases was reported. Lack of funding resulted in the trial hearings in Case 002 being reduced to three days a week. Ieng Thirith, one of four alleged senior Khmer Rouge leaders on trial in Case 002, was declared unfit to stand trial and released into the care of her family in September. She was believed to have Alzheimer's disease.

■ In February, the Supreme Court Chamber at the ECCC upheld the conviction of prison chief Kaing Guek Euv, known as Duch, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and increased his sentence from 35 years to life in prison. The Court also overturned an earlier decision to grant a legal remedy to Duch for his illegal detention for eight years by the Cambodian military court.

Amnesty International visits/reports

✈ Amnesty International delegates visited Cambodia in February to April, August/September and November/December.

📄 Cambodia: Imprisoned for speaking out – update on Phnom Penh's Boeung Kak Lake (ASA 23/010/2012)

📄 Summit leaders should push Cambodia on human rights failures (ASA 23/019/2012)

📄 Cambodia: Convictions of activists demonstrate dire state of justice (PRE01/633/2012)

CAMEROON

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Head of state:

Head of government:

Paul Biya

Philémon Yang

As in previous years, the authorities continued to restrict the activities of political opponents and journalists. People suspected of engaging in same-sex activities were detained and some were sentenced to prison terms. Those defending the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people were subjected to harassment and abuse. The authorities did not act to protect people from attacks. Conditions in some prisons were harsh and sometimes life-threatening.

Background

In November President Biya celebrated 30 years in power. Protest actions by opposition groups, linked to the anniversary, were dispersed by riot police.

Corruption remained pervasive, and government efforts to tackle the problem were limited in their effectiveness. In September a former government minister was jailed for 25 years for embezzling US\$29 million of public funds.

In September, Amnesty International submitted a memorandum to the government highlighting numerous human rights concerns.

Harassment of political opponents

The authorities continued to use the criminal justice system to harass and silence political opposition groups.

■ The trial of several dozen members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), arrested in 2008 and charged with holding illegal meetings and failing to produce identity cards, had not taken place by the end of the year. The accused had appeared in court on more than 30 occasions but the trial was adjourned each time because of the failure of the prosecution to present witnesses or the absence of court officials, including presiding judges.

■ Three members of the SCNC – Felix Ngalim, Ebeneza Akwanga and Makam Adamu – were arrested in April and charged with secession and revolution, offences under the Penal Code, in connection with their membership of and activities relating to the SCNC. During May members of the Territorial Surveillance police were alleged to have taken Felix Ngalim, detained at Kondengui prison in the capital, Yaoundé, to their offices in the city and beaten him with a truncheon, reportedly causing injuries to the soles of his feet, legs and other parts of the body. On 28 May, he was transferred to the central prison in Bamenda, capital of North West province. He appeared before the Bamenda High Court on 5 and 17 June and again on 3 July; each hearing was adjourned on the grounds that prosecution witnesses were unavailable to testify. Ebeneza Akwanga was reported to have escaped from Kondengui prison and fled Cameroon in May. Felix Ngalim was granted provisional release on 4 December and was awaiting trial at the end of the year.

■ In December, Dieudonné Enoch Meyomesse, an author critical of President Biya, was found guilty of armed robbery and sentenced to seven years'

imprisonment after an unfair trial by a military court in Yaoundé. He was considered a prisoner of conscience. He and several co-defendants, who were also sentenced to between two and nine years, had been arrested in November 2011.

Critics of the government expressed concern that some prosecutions for corruption targeted individuals who had disagreed with the government.

■ Titus Edzoa and Michel Thierry Atangana, who were due to complete their 15-year prison term for corruption, were tried on new charges and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in October. As in 1997, their trial in 2012 was unfair and appeared to be politically motivated.

■ Paul Eric Kingué, who had been imprisoned for alleged involvement in riots in February 2008 and for corruption, was sentenced to life imprisonment in February following further unfair trials on corruption charges. The Court of Appeal quashed the sentence but conducted a new trial and sentenced him in November to 10 years' imprisonment.

Human rights defenders

Human rights defenders and members of their families received death threats or were targeted by people they believed to be government agents or supporters.

■ On 27 March government officials prevented LGBTI activists in Yaoundé from holding an EU-financed workshop on the rights of sexual minorities. This action followed a violent disruption of the workshop by members of a self-confessed anti-LGBTI group known as the Rally for Cameroonian Youth. Members of the security forces had earlier arrested Stéphane Koche, the organizer of the workshop, and detained him for several hours.

■ In January, human rights defender Maximilienne Ngo Mbe was threatened with rape by men who claimed to be members of the security forces. Her niece was abducted and raped by men who told her that they were attacking her because of her aunt's activities against the government.

■ Lawyers Michel Togwe and Alice Nkom were threatened with violence because they had represented people charged with homosexual acts. Family members were also threatened. The authorities failed to condemn the threats or to offer any protection.

Freedom of expression – journalists

Several journalists were prosecuted during the year.

■ Television journalists Alex Gustave Azebaze, Thierry Ngogang and Anani Rabier Bindji, who were arrested in June 2008 together with university lecturer Manassé Aboya, were still awaiting trial, charged with conspiracy to handle a confidential document without authorization, as well as conspiracy to make biased commentary. The charges were believed to be politically motivated. The four men had been arrested after they criticized a government anti-corruption initiative and the arrests of two newspaper journalists during a televised debate.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

Violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, and other human rights violations targeting individuals because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, continued to occur. The authorities failed to protect people who were subjected to attacks and other abuse by non-state actors.

■ Franky Ndome Ndome who, together with Jonas Nsinga Kimie, was serving a five-year prison sentence for homosexual conduct, was beaten and otherwise ill-treated in June by guards at Kondengui prison. The two men were also repeatedly assaulted by fellow inmates. The authorities took no action against those responsible or to protect them from violence.

■ Three women – Martine Solange Abessolo, Esther Aboa Belinga and Léonie Marie Djula – were arrested on 14 February in Ambam, Southern province. They were accused of being lesbians after Léonie Djula's husband reportedly told the authorities that his wife had been enticed by the other two women into engaging in same-sex sexual relations. Martine Abessolo and Esther Belinga subsequently appeared before the Ambam Court of First Instance on charges of engaging in same-sex sexual relations and defaming Léonie Djula. They were granted provisional release on 20 February and appealed against irregularities in their arrest. The Ebolowa Court of Appeal had not delivered a verdict by the end of the year.

■ On 17 December the Court of Appeal upheld the 2011 conviction of Jean-Claude Roger Mbede for homosexual activity. He had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Prison conditions

Conditions in Cameroon's two largest prisons, in Yaoundé and Douala, were harsh and constituted cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and in some cases were life-threatening. Prisoners suffering from mental illness did not have access to psychiatric care. At the end of the year both prisons were holding five times their intended capacity.

Death penalty

Government information indicated that 102 prisoners were on death row at the start of the year. The Cameroonian National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms recommended that the government abolish the death penalty.

Amnesty International visits/reports

✈️ Amnesty International delegates visited Cameroon in December.

CANADA

CANADA

Head of state:

Queen Elizabeth II, represented by
Governor General David Johnston

Head of government:

Stephen Harper

There were continuing systematic violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Immigration and refugee law reforms violated international human rights norms.

Indigenous Peoples' rights

In January, hearings began before a government-appointed review panel to consider a proposal to build a pipeline connecting the Alberta oil sands and the British Columbia coast. The controversial Northern Gateway project would pass through or near the traditional lands of dozens of First Nations, many of whom have expressed public opposition.

In February, the federal government acknowledged before the CERD Committee that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples could be used when interpreting Canadian laws, but took no steps to work with Indigenous Peoples to implement the Declaration.